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one evening on the bank, they heard the music of a bag-pipes in the pit. On the next day they discovered the bones of a human being, and the remains of a well-adorned bag-pipes ! No other remains of the dead have been discovered in this locality, with the exception of one human skeleton, which was found on a rock on the townland of Clough-bee, near to the old church of Fossy. The remains lay about one foot deep under the surface, and with the bones were found a knife and fork.

Not far from the Piper's Pit, towards the west, are what are called by the people, War Pits ; evidently entrenchments made by the soldiers of the O'Mores or O'Kellys. Numbers, in all probability, have fallen on the plain on which the entrenchments are situated.

To the north-east of Timahoe, and near to the line of battle fought by the Leinster and Munster armies, is a place called *Βόταρ-α-μαρβέτα* (*Boro-vorre*), or the slaughter-road, because numbers there fell in battle. There the O'Mores and O'Broenains of Ui-Duach fought, and the tradition of this locality is, that the O'Mores were victorious. On the plain of battle was formerly a large pit into which the dead were cast and earth thrown over them, as appeared by a quantity of human bones discovered there some years since.

ON THE SUPPOSED PELASGIAN INSCRIPTION OF TORY HILL.

BY THE REV. JAMES GRAVES.

[*Read at the Meeting of March 5th.*]

The late William Tighe, Esq., in his valuable statistical work, was the first to record the existence, and speculate on the meaning of an inscription which had been discovered, carved on a cromleac-shaped structure which then rested upon the summit of Tory Hill, near Mullinavat, in this County. According to Mr. Tighe's reading, the characters were Pelasgic, the inscription was considered to be equivalent to the words BELI DIUOSE, and held to indicate the consecration of the pile to the service of Baal or Bel ; a deity, said by Dionysius the geographer, to have been worshipped in the British Isles under the *alias* of Dionusos. (*Statistical Observations relative to the County of Kilkenny*, p. 622).

Supposing Mr. Tighe's interpretation correct, it will at once be seen, that a fact is established, the importance of which can scarcely be overrated. A Phœnician colonization of the eastern portion of Ireland, or at least an intimate intercourse between that people and the Irish would be thereby proved beyond a doubt. From no other source could the "Pelasgic B" and other supposed Phœnician characters of the inscription be derived, as it is acknowledged that the Greeks received the inestimable treasure of syllabic writing from the Phœnicians. Indeed

to face Page 301.

18LI C14033

Nº1 as on the Stone

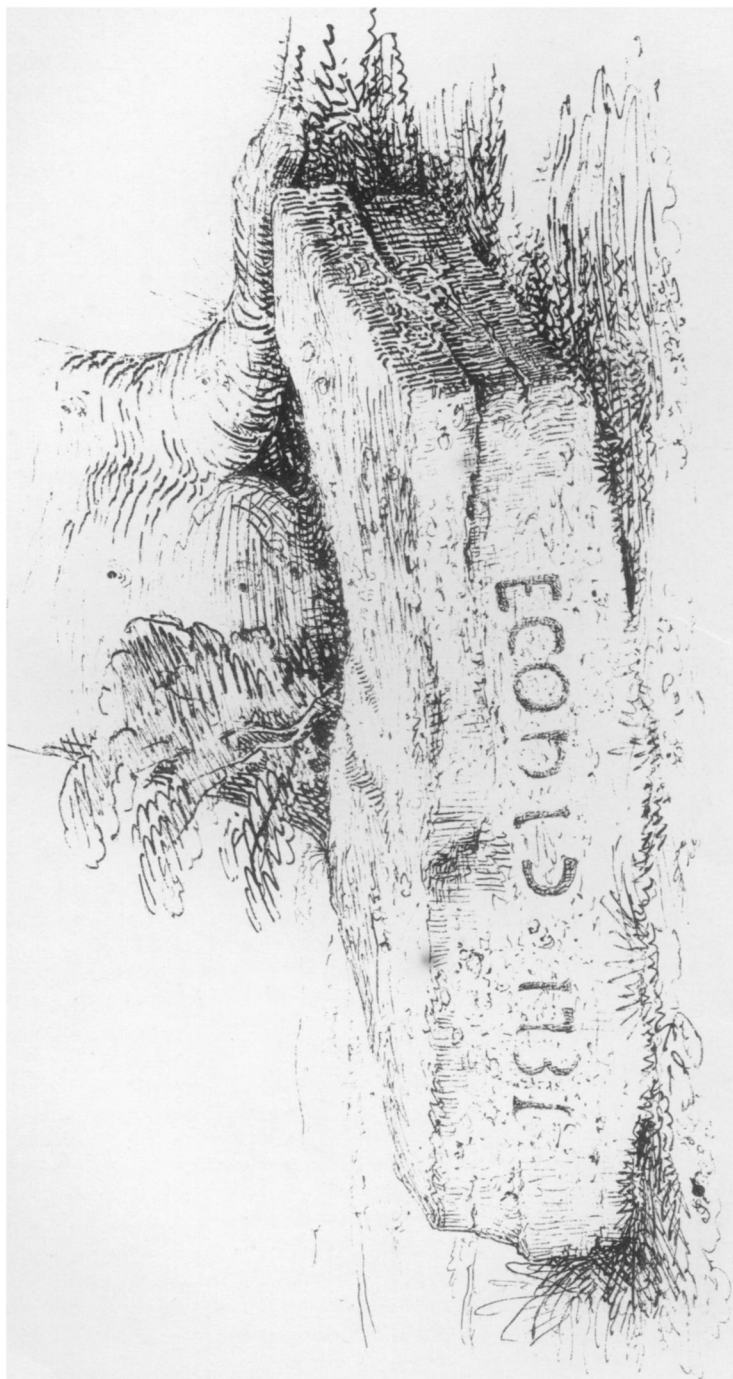
ECON13 1731

No.1. Reversed

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Nº2 as given by Mr. Figue

TORY-HILL INSCRIPTION.



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THE TORY-HILL INSCRIPTION
From the Original Slab Preserved at Woodstock, C^t Wilkes

Vallancey (*Collectanea* vol. vi. p. 164), and Wood (*Inquiry concerning the Primitive Inhabitants of Ireland*, pp. 135, 172), assumed the Tory Hill inscription, given by Tighe, and copied into Gough's edition of Camden, as the sole basis of their theories respecting the Phœnician origin of the early colonization of Ireland: the learned and judicious Lanigan, also (*Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, vol. i. p. 229), gravely cites the "Tory Hill monument" as one amongst many ancient remains in Ireland, which serve to shew that Bel was identical with the sun.

It is true that Mr. Townley Richardson, in a paper communicated to the Royal Dublin Society, had questioned the genuineness of this inscription; insomuch that Dr. Wood, in the advertisement to his work above cited, thought it necessary to lower the confident tone of his reference thereto, embodied in the text. But this notwithstanding, the "Tory Hill inscription" continued to be quoted by many persons as authentic; and the error, if error there were, seemed as far as ever from being abated. Under these circumstances, it was suggested by Mr. Windele, of Cork, that it lay within the legitimate province of this Society to investigate the matter and set it finally at rest.

The Right Hon. W. F. Tighe, who filled the chair at the meeting before which Mr. Windele's communication was read, observed that as an examination of the original inscription would probably set the matter at rest, he would gladly afford every facility for a full investigation, the stone being still in existence, and carefully preserved in his garden at Woodstock; whither it had been many years since removed by the peasantry, under the belief that they would thereby gratify the late Mr. Tighe. Accordingly, for the purpose of making the proposed examination, I proceeded some time since to Woodstock, in company with my brother Secretary, and carefully examined the block, together with the inscription it bears. The slab, according to the late Mr. Tighe, originally measured six feet long, five feet wide, and one foot four inches in thickness. Its present dimensions, which can only be given approximately, as the block is very irregular, are about three feet long by eighteen inches wide, and one foot thick. The original slab had been broken to facilitate its removal; the inscription, however, remained perfect.

After a careful examination of the letters, the conclusion which forced itself on our minds was, that the inscription is, comparatively speaking, modern; the rudeness of its execution, arising no less from the ignorance of the sculptor, than from the coarse texture of the block of breccia (well described by its *alias* of pudding stone), being sufficient to explain any deviation from the form of letters in use at the commencement of the last century. At first sight, it presents the combination of characters represented in the accompanying plate (diagram, No. 1). These differ materially in at least four letters, namely, the first, third, seventh, and last, from the representation given by Mr. Tighe, and which, for comparison, I have also lithographed (diagram,

No. 2). The "Pelagic B" exhibits the most striking discrepancy, the peculiar hooked form of the top of the letter being totally absent on the stone. Strange indeed it must always have appeared, that a people, deriving their knowledge of letters and the arts from a nation so high in the scale of civilization as the ancient Phœnicians, should have selected the peculiarly rough and unsuitable surface of undressed *mill stone grit* for an inscription in honour of their principal deity, or have carved that inscription in a manner so rude as that exhibited by the stone in question.

It has been already observed that the inscription, even as figured by Mr. Tighe, demands considerable straining in order to produce the desired result; the reader being required to imagine the existence of the "fine strokes" of the "Pelagic B," to give the same force to the two "E's," although one is reversed, to read "C" for "D," and a reversed "C" for "S." The alphabets in "the Remains of Japhet" are cited in support of this proceeding, which for aught I know may fully warrant it—yet I cannot help thinking such a course an unsafe one to be adopted in the interpretation of inscriptions, savouring very much of the canon which we, archæologists, are libellously held to favour; namely, that by assuming a vowel to stand for anything, and a consonant for nothing, any one word may be converted into any other. But the strangest part of the story remains to be told; when the sketch was reversed it unmistakeably exhibited, not an inscription in honour of any Pelagian god, but the prosaic words E.CONIC, 1731—words which however mysterious in appearance, commemorate—not a Pagan deity, but an humble hewer-out of mill-stones. This reading I am now enabled most satisfactorily to substantiate by the testimony of Professor O'Donovan, who, to the honour of this county be it spoken, is a native of the locality immediately bordering on Tory Hill, and descended in the female line from the Gaul-Burks, of Ballinlaw and Gaulskill. Dr. O'Donovan's testimony, given in a letter which I lately received from him, is as follows:—

"My grandfather knew the person who carved this inscription well. I heard this from my uncle Patrick, who was, as he often told me, the fifth in descent from Edmond Denn the outlaw, or tory, from whom Tory Hill was named. He (my uncle Patrick) knew all about the mills and mill-stones of the County of Kilkenny, and was particularly acquainted with the history of *E. Conic*, and his rude workmanship. Ned, the *Pelagian*, died about 1745, and little dreamed of his future celebrity. Edmond Conic, a mill-stone cutter went one morning early to commence working at a mill-stone on the top of the hill; but his fellow-labourers (without whose assistance he could not well commence his work) did not join him at the time appointed;* and he therefore,

* They remained drinking at Mullinavat, one of the most uncivilized villages in Christendom before the establishment of the police.

(knowing the Arabic figures and the letters of his name), amused himself by cutting his name and the date, 1731, on the stone in question. He was so bad a scholar that he reversed (as children constantly do) one of the letters—the last C of his surname. The stone was at this time lying flat on the surface of the hill, and remained so for many years after his death. The exact year I do not know, but I conversed with old men who remembered the year and the day, and could vouch for the fact, when the supposed *cromleac* was raised on its supporters! A number of *boys* repaired to the top of the hill to amuse themselves; and after several rounds of boxing, wrestling, and ‘throwing the stone,’ they wished to try who was the best leaper; and finding this inscribed stone ready at hand to answer their purpose, they raised it on others to the height required for a ‘running *leap*,’ but it happened that they placed it in such a position as that the letters appeared reversed. They departed to their respective homes leaving it in this position, little imagining that they had erected an altar to any god! Shortly after this, some gentlemen happened to ascend the hill, and observing the stone, were struck with the strange appearance of the letters, and one of them, thinking that he had discovered an ancient inscription, made a sketch of the stone and the letters, in their inverted position, and having shewn this sketch to some of the *literati* at Waterford, he created a celebrity for the locality which induced many to visit Tory Hill, to try and read the wonderful inscription. Its fame at length reached the ears of Mr. Tighe, who had a drawing of it made for his book on the County of Kilkenny.

“I spent a whole day looking for this stone, and for the cave called *Labby-Emoinn* (Edmond *Denn’s* Bed), as early as the year 1822; but, having no guide, I was obliged to descend to the nearest house to make inquiry for the exact position of ‘the stone with the *ancient* inscription.’ An old man informed me that it had been removed to Mr. Tighe’s own house. And he added—‘that stone is not so curious as Mr. Tighe and others think. The inscription is nothing in the world but the name of a poor mill-stone cutter, who was well known in this neighbourhood, and remembered by old men not long dead. His name was *Ned Conic*; eh! then, it is astonishing how *larned* men can make such fools of themselves!’

“I have written all this for the information of the members of the Kilkenny Archæological Society, who may examine the locality. Let them not be imposed upon by any *local knaves*.† The date on the stone is sufficient evidence of its literary value, and any attempt to create for it a fictitious importance, would be altogether beneath the dignity of the Society. I could heartily wish that it were Pelasgic, but I regard truth more than any chimerical national honour or dignity.

† “Now Broe, tell me the *TRUE* tradition. Oh! no, Sir, the true tradition would not be believed. I’ll tell you what Tommy Moore wrote!”—*Guide at Glendalough*.

“The real name of the hill is *Sliabh Ua g-Cruinn*, i.e. the mountain of [the barony of] Igrine, in which it is situated. The name has been formed exactly like Knockiveagh, i.e., the hill of Iveagh, in the County of Down; and the name of Tory Hill is not older than the time of Edmond Denn, the Tory, who was the proprietor of this hill and the surrounding townlands, in the beginning of the seventeenth century. *Slieve-I-grine* means the mountain of Igrine, as surely as Ros-Ibercon denotes the point, or wood of Ibercon, and it no more denotes *mountain of the sun*, than it does Mount Ida! Any argument, therefore, founded on the Irish name of the hill in favour of sun-worship, is ideal and baseless, and I trust that the members of the Society will carefully consider what I have here written. The young generation now living around the base of Tory Hill are probably not aware that such a stone ever existed on the hill, and hence the danger of trusting to their assertions.”

In thus impugning the learned theory of the late Mr. Tighe (for, although mistaken it displays much research) I am solely actuated by a wish to elicit truth, and a desire to suggest the necessity of caution in *theorizing* on the history or literature of the primæval inhabitants of our country. Nothing could give *me* greater pleasure than the discovery of an undoubted Phœnician inscription in Ireland, or the possibility of connecting the ancient civilization of her inhabitants with that extraordinary people: but it will at once be seen that the propounding of theories utterly groundless, or merely supported by a perverted display of learning, so far from attaining the end in view, only serves to throw discredit on the study of Irish antiquities in general—indeed we may safely attribute to the wild fancies of the Beaufort-and-Vallancey school the unmerited neglect which it has so long been the fate of Irish antiquities to experience. Neither let me be understood as meaning, by the foregoing observations, to disparage Mr. Tighe’s most valuable topographical work—a work which will ever be esteemed a treasure by the local historian, and must prove a lasting monument to the genius of the author. Mr. Tighe did not profess to enter deeply into the antiquities of the County of Kilkenny (see page 622); yet the mass of valuable matter which he has brought together in that department of county history, will ever serve as a rich mine to future collectors; and if in the present instance he was led to form an erroneous conclusion, the mistake should not be attributed to him, but to the school of Irish archæology then in vogue.